

MEDIA RELEASE

16 June 2015

The Story of the Memorial for Children who died in State Care

The unveiling of the Memorial for children who died while in State Care at the West Terrace cemetery on Wednesday 17 June 2015 is a significant event.

The memorial began over two years ago as an idea in the mind of Steven Page, a Forgotten Australia who spent all of his childhood in state care. He knew of children who had died in institutional and foster care but did not know any of their names or where they were buried. Steven made contact with Historian, Dr Karen George, through the Find & Connect web resource, a web site for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants and anyone interested in the history of child welfare in Australia www.findandconnect.gov.au

Karen met Steven at State Records of South Australia and showed him how to research information about child deaths in open access Admission Registers of government and subsidized non-government institutions such as those run by the Catholic Church and the Salvation Army. Steven also researched early State Children's Council correspondence and using his own initiative identified other sources for further research. He taught himself how to reference, to use a laptop, email and other programs.

Steven and Karen developed a list of over 100 children who died in State Care in South Australia. Using the Record Search system on the Adelaide Cemeteries Authority website, Karen identified that many of these children were buried in unmarked graves at West Terrace Cemetery. Late in 2014 Steven and Karen drafted a letter to the Premier and the then Minister for Education and Child Development, Jennifer Rankine suggesting that as the State Government was the 'parent' of these children while they were in State Care, that it would be a fitting tribute for the government to contribute to the cost of a memorial.

In his research Steven uncovered the story of Jane Poole, the first child boarded out of the Destitute Asylum. She was taken by Caroline Clark, the founder of the Boarding Out/Foster Care system and she was placed with a female friend of hers. Jane sadly died and was buried at West Terrace Cemetery. Learning of this story made our choice of memorial site in the Caroline Clark Memorial Garden even more fitting. The support and care shown by the Adelaide Cemeteries Authority and particularly Tony Amato, the ACA Team Leader (Marketing and Communications) has been integral to the development of this Memorial. As well as Jane Poole, Karen and Steven identified the stories of a number of the 50 children who will be remembered at this site. These children are also representative of the many more unidentified children.

The South Australian Government contributed \$8000 towards the memorial. A further \$1255 from the Cemeteries Authority provided enough funds to cover the cost of a large commemorative stone and 50 individual pavers with the names, ages and dates of death of the children.

The Memorial ceremony will remember and acknowledge the lives and deaths of these children and will provide a permanent place of solace and reflection for Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants, members of the Stolen Generations and anyone else who has experienced Out-of-Home care.

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